

# A Belgian

By  
PAULINE BRADFORD  
MACKIE

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All night Maurice Beaulieu was possessed with the certainty that Jean was lying, wounded, in the open field. He knew the lad trusted him to come, so Beaulieu tossed as a mother might and could scarcely wait for the dawn. He talked to Jean. The stars were piling.

"There, so, Jean," he reached for his boots—"so, Jean, keep up your courage."

He raised his flask and tasted of its contents:

"So, Jean, a few drops, they put heart in a man."

He stuffed a loaf of bread into his knapsack.

"Now, a crumb, Jean—so!"

He gathered up gauze and dressing for a wound and thrust it into his knapsack. "So now, Jean, let us see."

Al-h-h-h, that is bad, but we'll get you well. Let me tie on this bandage. They'll do better for you at the hospital, but this will serve till we get there."

He flung his knapsack over his back.

"So, Jean, put your arms around my neck. Gently, gently; I'll not let you fall. That's better, eh?" He laughed.

"The uh-lans didn't get you, Jean."

It was gray when he went down the road. People had their houses open, but the shop windows were closed. At the city gate an officer talking with a sentry recognized Maurice.

"Hello, Beaulieu!" he called. "You have been promoted for bravery."

Beaulieu nodded as a matter of course. He had fought like a demon to kill men; he must have yelled like a maniac; his throat was raw inside; he had risen to a kneeling position in the trenches to snatch a flag which had been shot away from Jean, and he had waved it high above his head to cover the retreat of his companions.

And then the uh-lans were on him again, but he was up and running with the flag, and he had escaped; somehow he had escaped. It was a miracle. He never doubted Jean's safety until the lad could not be found.

"Where are you going, Beaulieu?"

"For Jean," Beaulieu answered.

"Valles, he is missing!" the officer asked. "Have you been through the hospitals?"

"He is not in them," Beaulieu answered.

This delay tortured him. He knew he could make his search better before the sun was up, for the gleam of the bayonets had dazzled him yesterday, and from the field they would flash in his eyes now.

Beaulieu pointed. "Valles can't be far," he added. "We were right in those trenches, just back of those bushes."

"Well, go on, then," said the officer; "but be cautious. Remember the wounded have been taken off the field. You won't find him alive."

"Alive," thought Beaulieu impatiently; "no, not if this talking keeps up much longer." He saluted and burst away.

He stepped out into the field. He had known he should see the rifles and the bayonets first, but they did not flash upon his eyes now.

No, they were dull and gray like the sky. He gazed blankly into the zenith; his first instinct was to look away from the ground.

There was still something to look at: yellow and very faint. He met its gaze. It looked at him steadily, blinked and went out. The thought of Jean gripped him, and he forced himself to look down again over the field.

There were spots on the bushes; thin, slow streams furrowed the ground; as the light increased these sluggish trickles, these splashes, were scarlet.

This was a shambles; the world a slaughterhouse.

All the panoply of war was gone; all that made it brilliant, all that goaded him on, was gone. Why had he been promoted for bravery?

He was not brave now.

His mind was confused; he must stop; he must be clear. There was a word which would help him if he could remember it.

He pressed his hand to his forehead, struggling for that word. Ah, he had it! Sure. He must be sane.

He strode firmly forward, looking neither to the right nor to the left, his gaze on those bushes just beyond the farther trench.

He heard low moans and cries, but he did not heed them.

Something moved in a heap of bodies. How dead men struggled! He passed on. There, out on a free space, ground, a dead Belgian was lying forward on his face.

Beaulieu paused. Clutched in the man's hand was an arm. He stared. Then he saw that the man's other arm had been shot off.

His heart jumped.

Could that slender foot be Jean? He went forward and turned him over. When he saw the face of a stranger he began to laugh.

Now that the fellow did not prove to be Jean, he saw comical it was. What did he expect to do with his arm. Run to the hospital with it to have it sewed on?

Beaulieu pursued his search, chuckling.

The east grew rosy and a sweet, cool breeze blew against him. The day promised to be fine and clear. He was glad of that.

Jean always liked to lie flat on his back in an open field, staring up at the sky with eyes that were as blue. Mme. Valles was a German, and her eyes were like her son's.

She wept because her sister had boys in the German army. Her own husband was a Belgian, and her sympathy must go with him; and Jean, her son—was he not fighting the uh-lans as well as his father?

But women took life hard.

He was sorry for women. He thought again of that fellow running off with his own arm before he collapsed. There was a saying in the Bible. "As one whom his mother comforteth." The fellow had probably started to run home to his mother. She must be proud of her big boy.

He chuckled again.

He had forgotten that word which had impressed him so strongly—that

word which would help him. He knew it was important, but he had forgotten it again.

He hummed a tune—a little, old, Alsatian tune—as he continued his search; the men whose faces he looked at made no impression on him; he only knew they were not Jean.

The sun flashed on the bayonets and sabers lying about; it was pretty as a sparkling sea.

He bent over a body. Some instinct made him rise and whirl about on his heels.

He was face to face with one of the uh-lans. The German was on foot. Each man was but a mirror of the other, so identical were their expressions; each had believed himself alone searching for a friend. They stared at each other; they turned; they ran in opposite directions as if pursued by demons.

The fight was out of both of them. Beaulieu dropped his rifle as he ran. Horror was on his heels. He stumbled and fell and lay as if dead, then reached slowly for his rifle.

As his hand gripped it he realized that it must be another man's, for he had dropped his own.

He sat up and looked over the field. The enemy had disappeared. He turned his head, and there beside him lay Jean. It was Jean's rifle he held. He smiled by the smile on Jean's face that the lad was dead.

Only dead men were happy like that; that is, the right sort of dead.

He chuckled again.

men, not the kind who struggled to get back to life.

Jean's blue eyes looked straight up into the sky.

Beaulieu touched the boy's face. It was still warm. This he knew that pale star which blinked at him and went out was a signal from Jean. He wished he could lie down beside him, but he had promised to return.

He had been promoted for bravery, this Beaulieu. Who was the fellow who had promised to get back to him. He must find Beaulieu again.

He lifted Jean on his back and started homeward. It was strange that he was carrying Jean's rifle instead of his own.

It was a message that he must fight for them both. He was grim but exultant as he strode on. Where he had killed one man before, now he would kill two; it would be double the number always, double for Jean.

The ground was uncertain and he stumbled; then he realized he was trampling over the dead with his boots on. He laid Jean down and took off his boots, then lifted his friend again and went on in his stocking-feet.

When he came into the city again no one offered to help him, for Beaulieu was a giant in strength and he bore Jean as though he had been a girl.

He climbed the road and turned into a small hotel.

Mme. Valles sat at the table with the one guest left in the hotel; she was having an extra cup of coffee with her and they were talking about the war.

Beaulieu's figure filled the doorway and his shadow fell across the two women.

Mme. Valles raised her hands. She was going to cry out, but somehow she did not. She saw that he managed to get to a door; it opened into his bedroom.

"Put him here, Maurice. Can you get a doctor?"

Beaulieu laid Jean down on his mother's bed. He nuzzled Mme. Valles' cheek so softly in his pity.

"No, Jean does not need a doctor, Mama Valles."

He went out, closing the door on the two women. There was a stranger in the dining room, and he remembered Mme. Valles did not like curious eyes.

He sat down in the first chair he reached, exhausted.

The guest in the hotel was an American—Miss Dewey. She had expected to join friends in Berlin. She kept saying to herself that she had never expected this war when she went abroad.

When she saw Beaulieu's pallor she ran to the kitchen and called Marie, the young girl who assisted Mme. Valles as a kind of underhousekeeper, to bring hot coffee at once.

They have brought home Mme. Valles' son dead," she exclaimed, "and I think the man who brought him is ill. He looks so white."

"Yes, mademoiselle," answered Marie. Her hand shook so she kept pouring the coffee into the saucer instead of the cup.

"Here," said Miss Dewey, "I will attend to that." She seized the coffee pot and poured the coffee with a steady hand. "Now you bring a basin of warm water to wash his feet. They are bleeding and his stockings are cut in shreds."

"Yes, mademoiselle," answered Marie. "Please tell me—where is Jean?"

"His mother has him in her room. She has shut the door. Hurry with that basin, Marie." Miss Dewey went back to Beaulieu. "Try to take a little of this coffee. It will do you good."

Beaulieu lifted his heavy eyes to her face. "Thank you."

Marie came hurrying in with towels and a basin of water and, kneeling down, peeled off the ragged stockings with tender fingers. She was young and dark and richly colored.

Suddenly she pressed Beaulieu's bare foot to her bosom, sobbing, while she murmured: "My Jean, my Jean!"

She was to have married Jean Valles in the autumn.

Beaulieu's brows contracted with pity. "Poor Marie!" he said. "Poor Marie!" His mind seemed entirely clear again.

The coffee helped him. He watched her as she sat back on her heels, letting his feet drop into her lap and looking up pitifully at him.

"Now, I shall have no husband."

He saw her poor, little, drooping mouth, the wee in her eyes.

It was more than grief for Jean. It was desolation come upon her. The issues of life were cut off. She would have no husband, no children. Why was she left a woman?

This was what war did for women! Beaulieu spoke with difficulty, for his throat was dried, and he was so tired.

"I will return and be your husband."

When she saw the kindness on his face she bent forward and laid her face against his breast, sobbing. He patted her shoulder until she grew quiet. Then he said: "Now, I must be going."

Miss Dewey was crying, too. She ran out to get him another cup of coffee. "What a good man," she thought.

Marie knelt and dried his feet and put a pair of clean stockings on him. They were Papa Valles', as were also the boots, she brought. Papa Valles had gone to the war, too, and he was a big man like Beaulieu, not slight like Jean. Jean was so pretty—a girl. Her tears fell more gently.

Beaulieu pulled on the boots. He rose and shook hands with Miss Dewey. "Good-by," he said. "When you return to your own country remember me."

She stood on the steps of the hotel, while Marie followed him to the road. "Wait," he said; "I was forgetting something."

He thrust his hand into his pocket and drew forth a big key and gave it to Marie. "It is the key to my shop. I'll do my best to come back all in yours."

She took it as a child might. "Yes," she kept her eyes fixed wistfully on Beaulieu's face.

"Good-by," he said, and bent to kiss her cheek; then suddenly drew her into his arms and kissed her mouth. "Good-by, my wife!"

The blood coursed freely through his veins once more. That kiss—so fresh, so sweet—had revived him. It was as though Marie had become a stranger, a woman whom he had fallen in love at first sight.

Their love sprang new born from this moment; it had no past. He went off down the road with a swinging gait, his shoulders squared. The good God meant well by man. His hand must be over this somehow—yes, over it all.

"Where is his shop, Marie?" asked Miss Dewey.

"The fourth one down on that side, mademoiselle," answered Marie. "Oh, that beautiful lace shop!"

Miss Dewey exclaimed. "There are some wonderful rose-places in the window. I noticed them the first day I was in town. So he is a lace-maker?"

"Yes, mademoiselle."

Beaulieu reached the top of the road. He turned and waved his cap. He was still waving the cap when he saw the shadow of the hotel on the wall. "He is gone," said Marie. She clasped her hands on her breast. "Think, mademoiselle, how one hour can bring me two sorrows. It is war!"

He looked at the clock. It was ten. He was in a lace-maker's shop.

"Perhaps I should have spoken first to you," said the prince, talking rapidly. "But I said, 'This is America, where there must not be too much formality.' Besides, I was crazy—crazy with love—as I have been ever since first I looked at her."

"No scene, please," cautioned Elizabeth. "I don't want to see you crying."

The hand-singer, her remark drew blood apparently.

"It is true that I have debts," the prince went on; "but they are the debts of my ancestors. I pay interest on them. No one expects more than that. They are like state debts—what you call national debt. A national debt is never paid. But why mention such things? It is my love. You I followed again back to Europe."

"Will you have cream or lemon?" asked Elizabeth, suddenly remembering the tea things.

"So why—why—will you not have me?"

"Shall I go over it all once more?" asked Elizabeth, smiling but cruel. "I've seen enough of these international marriages to make me sick. I'll ever marry—which I doubt—I'll marry an American. I'll marry a man who can take care of me, just as though I didn't have a cent in the world; one who will work, accomplish something, be someone by his own efforts. Since you owe so much, by your own admission, why don't you work and pay?"

"Elizabeth!"

Mrs. Dracoon was scandalized, as she often was by this ultra-modern daughter of hers; but the prince was listening, sober, intent.

"I can't work, the way you mean," said Prince Frederick with a bad breath. "I'm a Hohenstaufen. I belong to the empire. If it were not for that, there is nothing in the world I wouldn't do to show you—show you how I love you. Even now, I do so with honor, I'd blow out my brains."

"I've dropped my fan," said Mrs. Dracoon.

The prince recovered it for her with a little laugh just as the music, with a succession of rippling scales suggestive of a flight of butterflies, went up into the air and was silent.

Silent, also, for most of the time were Mrs. Dracoon and her daughter as they drove home a little later through the high-arched allees of the Bois. They were stopping at the Bristol. They would be moving on soon to one of the German spas, which was most likely. And they were both willing to pretend that it was this approaching departure from Paris that was keeping a little restrained, a little blue.

Finally Mrs. Dracoon spoke.

"Don't you think you're a bit brutal with him, Beth? Young Germans have been known to kill themselves."

"Oh, he'll show up again," said Elizabeth.

Paris was like a pond overstocked with goldfish—filled with the rich and idle from the four quarters of the world. Came the end of Grand Prix week, and it was as though some mighty hand had opened all the sluices of the pond. The goldfish scattered.

The Dracoons lingered longer in Paris than they had expected—a matter of new gowns—and then floated on, with other goldfish, to the German resort. But still there was no sign of Prince Frederick of Hohenstaufen.

It troubled them both a little secretly. He wasn't acting in accordance with form. Generally when an impoverished prince once fixes his attention on a dazzling bait like Elizabeth Dracoon—handsome, educated, immeasurably rich in her own right—he becomes as a ravening pike.

So they both thought. They were not without experience. But they said nothing about it. Not until one night.

It was the night that followed a hideous day. From early morning they had been crowded with strangers whom they feared and distrusted in the tiny, suffocating compartment of a third-class railway carriage. All day the train had crawled and stopped, then crawled again, like a wounded



"Look Out! He's Coming Over."

The heir of Hohenstaufen dropped into the chair that a waiter had already pushed into position, gave one meaning look at Elizabeth Dracoon, then turned once more to the older woman.

"As soon as I learned you had gone, then I left," he said.

"Wait," he said, "I was forgetting something."

"A coincidence," said Mrs. Dracoon. "A coincidence," conceded the prince, "but designed by me."

He looked from mother to daughter. Mrs. Dracoon was listening intently, no doubt, although she had the air of one who is rather preoccupied with something else. The daughter's eyes met his with the suspicion of a challenge.

Hadn't they settled this, once and for all, that night the prince had proposed to her over in Philadelphia?

"You see," he said, "with an effort at lightness, 'I got to thinking over what Miss Elizabeth said to me about international marriages. I don't see how it applies to us. I know that she is not crazy for a title—other than her own high-born name; and me, I'm not after—after money.'"

The rosy-faced hand, responsive to a frenzied leader, was slinging and banging through a Hungarian rhapsody, giving promise that it would still be safe to talk about private matters for a long time to come.

"Elizabeth," he said, "that you had done her the honor—'Mrs. Dracoon began."

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worm, while other trains rushed by with loudly authority. Soldiers, helmeted, brusque, impersonal, had jerked the door of the compartment open at times, had stared and talked among themselves, but had answered no questions.

Even more lugubrious was the deepening night. It had begun to rain. Then, finally, as though the wounded worm was completely exhausted, the train came to a halt and moved no more.

There was another hour of stifling misery, then once more the door was jerked open and there came the order in the clipped, military German of Prussia:

"All passengers get down!"

It was almost panic as the shuddering civilians—men, women and children, Dutch, Belgian, French, English, American—clambered out; but information somehow got about that here they were to remain until mobilization was complete, that there was a hotel in the neighborhood that was to be their temporary prison.

"And what is the name of the place?" Elizabeth asked a mammoth Belgian, who, with his wife and four children, had been their cellmate throughout the day.

Said the Belgian:

"This is Hohenstaufen!"

A moment later she and her mother were leaning against each other for mutual support.

"Very stiff and straight in a new uniform, surrounded by officers who were showing him obvious respect, there stood under the yellow shimmer of the station light some one whom they both had instantly recognized—Prince Frederick."

"I'll sing it, of course. Although I'm quite horse."

And my heart for an encore is a hymn."

—Memphis Commercial-Appeal.

Fairy Tales.

"Pleased to meet you."

"I had to work late."

"I can take a drink or let it alone."

"My, isn't your baby pretty?"

"We have never had a quarrel since we were married."

Sure.

"It may seem queer," said Mr. Burke, "but you can bet it's so. An idle rumor does more work than anything I know."

The Wise Fool.

"Politeness costs nothing," remarked the sage.

"Maybe that's the reason why most people have no use for it," added the fool."